Telecom facility in hilly and tribal areas

*278. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are underway to ensure development of telecom facility in remote hilly and tribal areas; and

(b) the measures for reducing the tariff for making the service affordable for the rural and needy consumers?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) The various schemes and programmes for the Department of Telecom relate to the telecom development including modernisation of services and expansion of existing services for the entire country. The telecom services are important infrastructural requirements for socio-economic development and provide essential connectivity among the people across the country to all sections of population including development of telecom facilities in remote hilly and tribal areas.

To achieve this Department of Telecom has adopted Tribal Sub Plan to take care of special requirements of tribal areas. The Tribal Sub Plan has been in operation since 5th Five Year Plan thus benefiting the tribal area and bringing about a major qualitative change in the socio-economic pattern of their lives.

The quantified benefits and targets achieved so far under Tribal Sub Plan are as under:—

Achievements under Tribal Sub Plan Till 31.12.2001

Sl. No.	Item	Achievements till 31.12.2001
1.	Telephone Exchanges	3815
2.	Switching Capacity Lines	1428651
3.	Direct Exchange Lines	1091990

Sl. No.	Item	Achievements till 31.12.2001
4.	Village Public Telephones	43906
5.	Microwave Systems/OFC (route kms)	16642.51
6.	Satellite Stations	119

(b) The power for fixation of tariff of telecom services rests with "Telecom Regulatory Authority of India" (TRAI), which has given concessions for rural and low end telephone subscribers in its order of October, 1999. There is no special tariff for tribal areas. However, BSNL is having different tariff for Urban and Rural areas in accordance with the above order by TRAI. The tariff for rural areas are lower as compared to Urban areas for registration of new connections, rental and local calls upto a certain limit so as to make it affordable to Rural areas as below:—

Registration Charges:	Rural Rs. 500/-	Urban Rs. 2000/-
Monthly rental:	As per Statement-I (*See* below)	
Free calls and Unit call charges:	As per Statement-II (*See* below)	

Statement-I

Rental Charges

Sl.No.	Exchange system	Monthly Rental	
		Rural (Rs)	Urban (Rs.)
1.	Exchange system capacity of less than 1000 lines	50	120
2.	Exchange system capacity of 1000 lines and above but below 30000 lines	110	120
3.	Exchange system capacity of 30000 lines and above but below 1 lakh lines	150	180
4.	Exchange system capacity of 1 lakh and above	210	250

Statement-II

Call charges and free calls

	Rural		Urban	
	Number of Calls (Monthly)	Rate/MCU (Rs.)	Number of Calls (Monthly)	Rate/MCU (Rs.)
(i)	Upto 125 calls	Free	Upto 75 calls	free
(ii)	126 to 225 calls	0.60	76 to 200 calls	0.80
(iii)	226 to 250 calls	0.80	201 to 500 calls	1.00
(iv)	251 to 500 calls	1.00	Above 500 calls	1.20
(v)	Above 500 calls	1.20		

Telecom services in Andhra Pradesh

*279. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been taken any steps to provide/ improve telecom services in backward, rural and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) The Government is continuously taking steps to provide and improve telecom services in Rural, Backward and Tribal areas of whole country including Andhra Pradesh. All the telephone exchanges are of electronic type, with STD and Internet access facility. All of them except 4 in rural area are provided with reliable media.

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has already provided telephone facility to 23401 villages in Andhra Pradesh as per target and 85 villages have been provided with telephone by private operator. All the villages in the country including Andhra Pradesh are proposed to be provided with telephone facility by end of 2002.